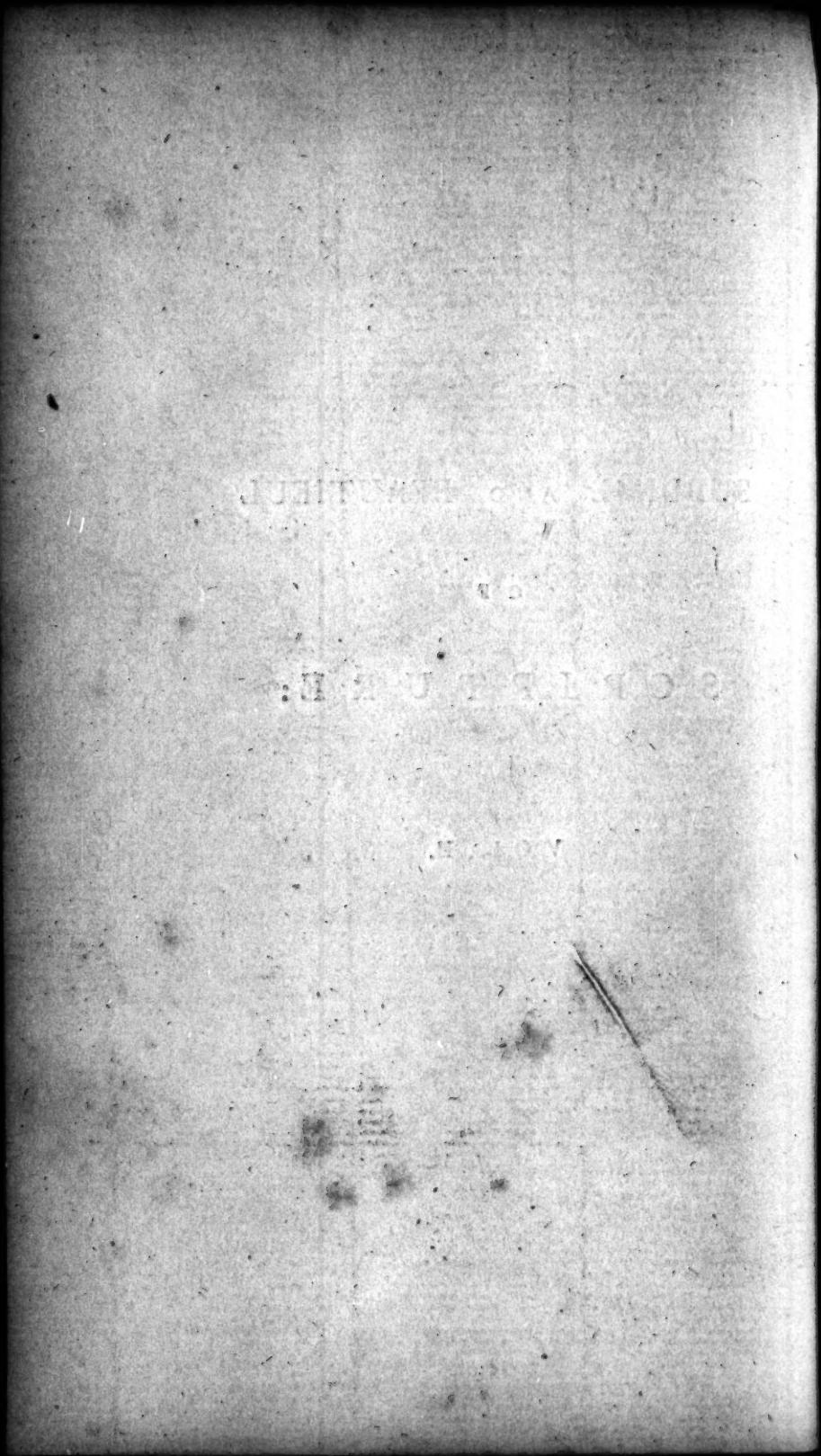


**SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL**

**O F**

**SCRIPTURE:**

**VOL. II.**



THE  
SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL  
OF  
SCRIPTURE:  
BEING  
ESSAYS  
ON  
SELECT PASSAGES  
OF  
SACRED COMPOSITION.

By COURTNEY MELMOTH.

INSTANCES, ALSO, OF MAJESTIC SIMPLICITY AND UNAFFECTED GRANDEUR, ARE TO BE MET WITH IN GREAT PLENTY THROUGH THE SACRED WRITINGS.

Smith's Longinus,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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M D C C L X X V I I .

THE  
SOCIETY FOR THE  
PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL

IN  
CATHOLIC COUNTRIES

EDWARD KAYE

SECRETARIAL

WORD-COMPOSITION

MORALITY

THE PRACTICAL USE OF A BIBLICAL  
MORALIST. THIS WORK IS A PRACTICAL  
TREATISE ON MORALITY FOR THE USE OF  
THEY WHO ARE IN THE POSITION OF  
LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCHES AND IN  
THE COMMUNITIES.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

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OF A MORALIST.

CHAPTER II.

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**I N S T I T U T E S o f M O S E S .**

**P A S S A G E .**

**AND IF A MAN CAUSE A BLEMISH IN HIS NEIGHBOUR; AS HE HATH DONE, SO SHALL IT BE DONE UNTO HIM.**

THE laws of Moses are, in part, very properly abolished, being, indeed, only instituted for local occasions, and adapted to the temper of the times. But there are others which, with little or no alteration, are, and deserve to be, of eternal force. In the two verses

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directly preceding this paſſage, there is a very excellent diſtinction made in point of punishments and offences. “ He that killeth a man  
“ ſhall ſurely be put to death : and  
“ he that killeth a beaſt, ſhall ſure-  
“ ly make it good.” Thus the hu-  
man perſon is rendered ſacred, and the animal, which is private pro-  
perty, is made ſecure to the pro-  
prietor. Methinks the following  
verſe may be conſidered as one of  
the great and original foundations  
of ſocial paſteurization : “ Breach  
“ for breach, eye for eye, tooth  
“ for tooth.” It is at this very  
day the true recriminating prin-  
ciple, not, indeed, quite literally,  
but

but eventually : and who can call the rectitude of it in question ? In reading these ancient records, however, we find several crimes punishable, which are now, though highly atrocious, scarce within the letter of the law. The blasphemer, and sabbath-breaker, for instance, was *stoned*; and now the price of an oath is, at worst, but a shilling : and the other matter, for the most part, is no object of attention. There are many minute articles in the code of Moses still in being amongst us : thus, an hired horse, dying upon its journey, is, to this day, as it was formerly ; being an hired thing,

B 2 it

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it came for his hire. The matter and custom of *gleaning* was, certainly, first derived from the following command : *But* *ow* *1973*  
*ignori* *won* *oia* *ldidw* *oldun*  
“When thou cuttest down thine  
harvest in the field, and hast for-  
got a sheaf in the field, thou  
shalt not go again to fetch it;  
it shall be for the stranger, for  
the fatherless, and for the wi-  
dow; that the Lord thy God  
may bless thee in all the work  
of thy hands.” *ni* *rekoris* *etin*  
*anti* : *ay* *Dynoms* *gaied* *ni* *Mit*  
*ai* *The* *termi* *of*, *an* *apprenticeship*  
seems to originate from the follow-  
ing *institute* in “If thou buy an  
“He-

" Hebrew servant, six years he  
" shall serve, and at the end of  
" the seventh he shall go out free :  
" and if a man sell his daughter  
" for a maid-servant, she shall  
" not go out, as the men servants  
" do." There is, I think, no  
doubt, but this is the foundation  
of the rule of allotting the harder  
labour of the fields to the male,  
and the easier cares of the house  
to the female. These are, indeed,  
curious and small; but surely, no  
man will think them *uninteresting*  
remarks. Now I am upon the  
subject of the statutes of Moses, I  
cannot neglect mention of various  
humane and social institutions,

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some of which are very improperly  
abrogated.

“ If thou meet thine enemy’s  
“ ox, or ass, going astray,  
“ thou shalt surely bring it back  
“ to him again: if thou see the  
“ ass of him that hateth thee,  
“ lying under his burthen, thou  
“ shalt surely help him.”

It is much to be feared, the  
enemies of the present day will  
scarce forbear *smiling* at this in-  
junction, so far from obeying it.

“ Thou shalt not countenance  
“ a poor man in his cause.”

In

In one sense, this is most rigidly observed in all the courts of Justice.

“ And if thou sell ought of thy neighbour, or buy ought of thy neighbour, ye shall not oppress one another.”

The *modern* maxim of striking a bargain, is, perhaps, something different from this.

“ And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then, thou shalt relieve him, so that he may live with thee.”

## SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL

It is really painful to comment,  
and draw parallels betwixt ancient  
and modern times, when we are  
compelled to censure the latter in  
so many cases:—let us, therefore,  
close the subject,

The modern maxims of thinking  
of pleasure is best able to sustain  
the greatest loss of life.

And if this property be mixed  
with some skill in dealing with  
things; then you will believe  
it may be used this way  
**ESSAY.**

ESSAYS AND PAPERS  
ESSAY XXII.  
THE STORY OF BALAAM and his Ass.

P A S S A G E.

AND THE LORD OPENED THE MOUTH OF THE ASS, AND SHE SAID UNTO BALAAM, WHAT HAVE I DONE UNTO THEE, THAT THOU HAST SMITTEN ME THESE THREE TIMES?

IN whatever light this matter is viewed, whether as an operation of the Deity (which we have no right to dispute, since the same power which can command water from the rock, can as easily inspire

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the animal with argument) or whether we consider it in the light merely of a moral fable, it is wonderfully beautiful and pathetic. I shall endeavour to illustrate it both scripturally and historically.

“ Now Balaam was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.” In the very setting out of the journey, it was a thing displeasing to the Deity, and the first hints of his displeasure were very remarkably displayed. “ And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand.” Upon this, the poor creature, very

SE)

natu-

naturally astonished at such a spectacle, turned aside out of the way, and went into the field; " And " Balaam smote the ass to turn " her into the way." In opposition however to blows, the animal awhile went on, till the same angelic appearance, standing in a path of the vineyards, made her fly in terror towards the wall, against which she unfortunately crushed the foot of her master: and for this second offence he smote her again. But still the celestial visitant resolved, as it were, to obstruct, or at least to delay the journey, stood at last in so narrow a place, that there was no possi-

possibility of passing either to the right hand, or to the left; and when the ass found herself thus beset, and thus thwarted in all her endeavours—what could she do? She had respect to the commands of her lord; but she was unable to obey them; possibly too, she was more than affrighted—she might be *awed* by the figure before her—she, therefore, fell down; and Balaam, considering this third trespass as a still greater aggravation of obstinacy, smote the ass with his staff. Then it was that the Power, who knew the innocence of the poor thing, took pity upon her sufferings, and, to put at once

an end to the hard usage, her mouth was opened, that she might plead her own cause with the man, and enter into a pathetic remonstrance with him upon the subject of his barbarity. " And she said " unto Balaam, What have I " done unto thee, that thou hast " smitten me these three times ?" But Balaam was now too violently angry to attend even to miracles, and, without regarding the circumstance, as being preternatural, he replied to it merely as an ordinary question, by wishing, in the vehemence of his heart, a sword was in his hand, that he might kill the offender upon the spot. And

*saying*

now

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now succeeds an answer which might melt the hardest heart, and soften the compassionate into tears.

" Am not I thine ass upon which  
" thou hast ridden ever since I  
" was thine, unto this day ? Was  
" I ever wont to do so unto thee ? "

Imagination here unavoidably extends the commentary. How, Balaam, canst thou thus ill entreat thy servant ? Have I at any time, save now, resisted thy designs, and have not thy slightest wishes been to me in the nature of injunctions ? Thrice hast thou lifted up thine arm in anger against me, and thrice have I borne the anguish without complaining. Ah, un-

gentle master—couldest thou not conceive that some peculiar occasion prevented my obedience? if haply nothing struck *thine* eye as an obstacle, surely, thou mightest have relied upon one, whose fidelity, both by day and by night, thou hast so often experienced. Am I not the old slave of your pleasure, contented with whatever food it is convenient for you to allot me—nothing loath to perform the labours to which I was born, and to earn the herb of the field before I ate it! To this expostulation, which one would think might have force enough to restrain the iron hand of inhumanity,

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ty itself, Balaam replied, by confessing that her arguments were true :

" Was I ever *want* to do so unto  
thee ? " Nay, answered Balaam.

Soon after this dialogue, the angel convinced Balaam of his fault, and he then bowed his face to the earth—struck, probably, with a sense of double impropriety—Why hast thou smitten thine ass ?—If a man was to be fairly asked this question in the courts of moral equity, those courts where Conscience sits as judge, how would he be able to answer it ? There is no need to run this fine narrative into the perplexities

of subtle and latent meaning, it is sufficiently admirable as an address to the human heart. And, indeed, the scriptures are not more earnest and persuasive in the cause of compassion, than in the cause of salvation. There is scarce a chapter in which pity, that sweet emanation of Heaven, is not enjoined; and that the reader might not be fatigued with sameness of sentiment, or tired with likenesses of language, the style of the subject is varied, almost a thousand times: sometimes the lovely quality of mercy is recommended to us, (as in the present instance) by a tender and attracting narrative—some-

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times by a beautiful allegory, or parable; and very often by a concise moral sentence, expressed in a way so irresistibly striking, that we are led to the practice of the virtue, not only by a veneration for its intrinsic charms, but by the additional graces which it receives from composition.

Even the severest curses in the scriptures are, for the most part, against cruelty, and to recommend kindness: and in the beginning of the 22d chapter of Deuteronomy, i. e. from verse the first to verse the seventh, there are sentiments of the most humane and affectionate

tionate tendency that ever were read, conceived, inspired, or practised. Let every man who has a heart, peruse them—I will not add—attentively—because, to peruse them *negligently*, where any degree of *feeling* is bestowed, is utterly impossible.

What must have been the sensations of Balaam when he understood from the lip of a Divinity, that unless the ass had turned in the very manner he did, the master would have been slain, and the servant preserved alive? How extreme should be the caution, and how palpable the error before pu-

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nishment is inflicted ; for such is the infirmity of man, he may thrice smite his preserver for those very actions, which, ultimately, produce the most desirable and eminent blessings ; and when once such a mistake happens, and the indignity is given, where is the man possessed of sufficient effrontery to meet the eye of his benefactor ? Every stroke we have given returns invigorated upon ourselves, and we feel the blows shamefully burning upon our cheeks.

ESSAY

## **E S S A Y XXIII.**

### **DEATH of MOSES.**

#### **P A S S A G E.**

AND THE LORD SAID UNTO MOSES, GET  
THEE UP INTO THIS MOUNT ABARIM,  
AND SEE THE LAND WHICH I HAVE GIVEN  
UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.

AND WHEN THOU HAST SEEN IT, THOU  
ALSO, SHALT BE GATHERED UNTO THY  
PEOPLE.

**H**OW few are there at this day  
in the world, whom such a  
command would not terrify? It is  
plainly ascertaining the most awe-

C 3 ful

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ful moment of mortality : yet the excellent person to whom it was spoken, appears to have received it without the least alarming emotion ; and that, not because he was insensible, but because he had talked with his maker as with a friend, and because he was assured. Being informed of his own death, indeed, he was anxious to fill up the vacancy which he should leave, properly, and therefore for the sake of posterity, petitioned for a successor. In these times, such intelligence, even though it were communicated in a dream, would disorder all the felicity of the day, and the very best of us, would

would dread the advances of the night, lest the horrid images should again appear: but if, as in this place, the tidings were conveyed by the voice of God himself, although the event was not to happen for fifty years, the whole scheme of life (however delightfully our imaginations had before coloured it, however bright our expectation, or splendid our circumstances) would be instantly destroyed: The radiance of the morning enwrapt suddenly amidst the gloom of midnight, gives us but a faint simile to express the astonishment and the anguish, that would, upon such an occasion, seize

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the soul : Instead of attending to our secular affairs, we should be incapable either of business or pleasure; even interest would want its usual stimulus, the veriest Niggard would forget his unvisited hoard, and at last, when the blow was just descending, with a fearful voice, and trembling hand, he would *appoint a successor*; or what is full as probable, his apprehensions would predominate over all ideas of natural justice, or else the strange suggestions of at least a possibility, that destiny might delay to discharge its promise, would induce him to die amidst the deceits of hope, and leave

leave his unsecured property to the rapacity of law, and the contest of various claimants. Moses, however, is represented as going on, immediately after this, in the great affairs which were allotted to him. Undisturbed by the common terrors of ordinary men, we still find him transmitting the laws of life and eternity, from God to man: He continued, as before, to settle with the same sagacity, the moral, civil and religious system: He was the amanuensis of Providence; and after he had done all the appointed service to society, he died at the age of one hundred and twenty years, in the fullest possession of every

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every faculty; for "his eye was  
" not dim, nor his natural force  
" abated." And yet, as there has  
not arisen another like unto Mo-  
ses, whom God knew face to face;  
and, as the life of man is, since  
considerably shortened (insomuch  
that all the scriptural similes of  
its brevity are in a moral sense  
unable to give us the precise idea)  
the concealment of the last hour,  
is a particular indulgence to us:  
Prescience would distress the most  
virtuous mind, and in every  
light *we* can possibly view *this*  
matter, ignorance is bliss, and  
foreknowledge, would, to all in-  
tents and purposes, be agony.

ESSAY

## ESSAY XXIV.

### STORY of CALEB and OTHNIEL.

#### P A S S A G E.

AND CALEB SAID, BE THAT SMITHED  
KIRJATH-SEPER, AND TAKETH IT TO  
HIM WILL I GIVE ACHSAA MY DAUGH-  
TER TO WIFE.

IN the short, but very pleasing narratives of Caleb and Othniel, bravery and piety are powerfully recommended and rewarded. Caleb's story is related by himself in the 14th chapter of Joshua,

from

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from whence we easily see into his character. Enamoured of glory himself, he naturally loved it in others ; and being called to battle in a righteous cause, he proposed, by way of encouragement to the youthful heroes of his day, the most precious prize in his possession—even Achsah, his daughter. This proposal fired the bosom and, animated the exertions of the youth Othniel, who took it, and received the beautiful reward. With this fair present, it should seem, he led a life of honour and virtue, ever warmly devoted to his God, and his country : for, after the death of Joshua, when the children of

Israel

Israel again relapsed into disobedience, and ingratitude, and the Almighty sold them to the king of Mesopotamia, as a punishment, Othniel was the person who, upon their repentance, was ordained to deliver them from the chains of captivity : and such was the wisdom of this hero's *mind*, that after he had rescued them from slavery by the valour of his arm, he kept the land in the composure of peace forty years. All that time the place had rest ; nor do we hear of any farther flagrant instances of trespass, or violation, till after his death ; upon which, that dis-

obedi-

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obedient people once more began  
to revolt, and degenerate.

The union of magnanimity and moral goodness well deserve the highest treasures of reward; and it were to be wished, that the courage of Othniel was constantly enriched by the principles of Othniel. War, in *itself*, is certainly only a more legal butchery than private murder, but when the sword is drawn in a cause like this, where integrity was blended with intrepidity, every bosom is officious to share the honours, and every hand ready to bestow the laurel. The father-in-law of Othniel was, him-

self not insensible, however, to the *deserts* of victory, and we find him asserting his claim before Joshua, like a soldier. How beautifully has he contrived to rehearse his own successes, without vain-glory, or ostentation! And he speaks of the services he has done, and is still able to do the state, without incurring from delicacy itself the character of a boaster. “ Forty  
“ years old was I, (says he) when  
“ Moses, the servant of the Lord  
“ sent me from Kadesh-barnea to  
“ espy out the land; and I brought  
“ him word again, as it was in  
“ mine heart. And Moses sware  
“ on that day, saying, surely the  
“ land

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“ land whereon thy feet have trod-  
“ den, shall be thine inheritance,  
“ and thy childrens’ for ever; be-  
“ cause thou hast wholly followed  
“ the Lord thy God. And now,  
“ behold the Lord hath kept me  
“ alive, as he said, these forty  
“ and five years, even since the  
“ Lord spake this word unto  
“ Moses, while the children of  
“ Israel wandered in the wilder-  
“ ness; and now, lo, I am this  
“ day, fourscore and five years  
“ old: and yet, I am as strong  
“ this day as I was in the day that  
“ Moses sent me: as my strength  
“ was then, even so is my strength  
“ now for war, both to go out,  
“ and

" and to come in. Now, therefore, give me this mountain, &c. if so be the Lord be with me then I shall be able to drive them out."

His plea was irresistible. The whole speech was sustained by a manly firmness, and a disdain of all that nauseous incense which is too frequently lavished by the servile petitioner. In consequence of this oration, Joshua blessed him, and willingly gave that which was requested. His own conquests thus paid, he was resolved to do justice to congenial merit: and, as an instance of his love of

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glory, and an example to others, he gave his child to him who should most deserve her. Othniel had no sooner obtained her, than the noble parent settled upon their issue a fresh inheritance of fields and springs. Here it is not easy to glance at a deficiency of modern times—a deficiency long deplored, and still remaining to be so. Where is the adequate meed for the present race of conquerors? Are the deliverers of our country for ever to be neglected—to starve after the toils of war, upon the stipend of divided pay, and to see the hand of power lifting up over their venerable

heads, the beardless babies of the troop to the very top round of the ladder of preferment, while *they* are condemned to languish at the view, and, even in the season of the silver hair, stand uncovered in the presence of their puerile superiors?—O, Britain, where is thy gratitude! O, ye distributers of honour, whither is fled the spirit of recompense?

ad hanc causam, ut illud non sit, absur-  
dum, ut etiam quaevis ratio exponatur.  
Vix enim, resipiens, loquaciter  
etiam distinguat etiam proportionem  
in mensibus, nisi inveniat quae, non  
in bonorum, sed in iustitiae et  
equitatis ratione, vel in ratione pietatis  
vel in origine, existat. Alioquin non  
poterit certus esse. Quia hoc est, ita  
quod est, hinc est, quod non potest  
essere. Non enim, ut dicitur, potest  
esse, quod non est. Non enim, ut dicitur,  
potest non esse, quod est. Non enim, ut dicitur,  
potest non esse, quod non est.

## **E S S A Y XXV.**

### **STORY OF NAOMI and RUTH.**

#### **P A S S A G E.**

AND RUTH SAID, INTREAT ME NOT TO LEAVE THEE, OR TO RETURN FROM FOLLOWING AFTER THEE; FOR WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO; AND WHERE THOU LODGEST, I WILL LODGE: THY PEOPLE, SHALL BE MY PEOPLE; AND THY GOD, MY GOD.

**T**HREE never was any thing more happily conceived, or more sweetly told than the book of Ruth. It seems chiefly designed to exhibit to us a lively and

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high-coloured picture of the force of female friendship on the one hand, and the weakness of resolution, when opposed by custom, on the other. The general circumstances of the story being uncommonly fine, will speak best for themselves, and afford proper comments in the progress of reciting them.

When the famine raged with much severity in her native land, Naomi, and her husband Elimelech, and their two sons, went to sojourn in the country of Moab; but Elimelech died, and Naomi, the widow, was left with her chil-

-dren :

dren : soon after this, those children "took them wives of the women of Moab ; the name of the one was Orpah, and the other Ruth." It came to pass that the young men, their husbands, died also, both of them, and now the poor widow was bereaved of her sons and her husband. Unable, therefore, to bear any longer a place in which every scene presented some image of lost endearment, or revived some distracting idea of conjugal or maternal tenderness, she resolved to seek solace from her sorrow, by change of residence. So she arose with her daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth,

that she might return from the country of Moab. It presently occurred to the poor woman, as she was journeying on her way, that if she was herself unhappy, it was no testimony of her affection to involve her sons' wives in equal calamities; and judging the reception she would be likely to meet in the land of Judah, entering it desolate, unfriended, and unadorned, she paused a moment, and thus pathetically addressed the young widows: "Go, my children, each of you return to your mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead, and with me.

" The

" The Lord grant that ye may find  
" rest, each of you, in the house of  
" your dear deceased husband."—  
Having uttered this short prayer  
for their happiness, she kissed  
them, and prepared to depart  
alone. How true to nature was  
their reply ! They did not pour  
forth unmeaning compliments of  
condolance—They did not inter-  
change any idle civilities of sor-  
row, for their anguish was too sin-  
cere for ceremony—Neither did  
they enter into the parade of pro-  
mising future interviews—for they  
spoke not at all. The extreme of  
grief has, at the first surprize, lit-  
tle to do with language—at the  
most,

most, it bursts into short exclamations, as if it would shew the impossibility of proceeding : for our alleviation, therefore, in these cases, that power, who to every wound hath provided something wherewith to heal it, gave the comfort of tears, so that the fullness of the sad heart is, in part, discharged by that kindly effusion which Providence has intended as a fountain to relieve the excesses of nature; either in the surplus of misery, or transport. “They lift up their voice “and wept”—A folio could not so well display their condition—After some time passed in this kind of significant silence, they said unto her :

her: "Surely, we will return with  
"thee unto thy people." Here again  
genuine grief discovers itself: one  
tender sentence, and one only, ex-  
presses their designs and wishes to  
attend her. In such cases, conciseness  
is nature, and circumlocution,  
mere art and affectation \*. Per-  
ceiving the design of the daughters,

the

\* The *pathetic*, as well as the *grand*, says the most elegant translator of Longinus, is displayed as strongly by silence, or a bare word, as in a number of periods. I will venture to say *much more strongly*, by a sentence than a volume, in many cases, and in some (as in the present instance) total silence is more expressive and characteristic than the most feeling or forcible sentence.

There is a kind of mournful eloquence  
In a dumb grief, which shames all clam'rous  
Sorrow.

Or,

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the widow-woman Naomi again  
began to dissuade them, and to  
press

Or, as a bard who better understood the operations  
of the human heart, more poetically has it,

My grief lies all within;  
And those external manners of laments  
Are merely shadows to the *unseen* grief  
That swells with *silence* in the tortur'd soul.

There lies the substance.

When words are too weak, says the critic, or co-lours too faint to present a *pathos*, as the poet will be silent, so the painter will hide what he cannot shew:—Mr. Smith hath offered a very fine example of this, wherein the skill of Timanthes, the painter, is shewn in marking the gradations of sorrow in a groupe of characters, till he had exhausted the passions, and silence became necessary to the last figure in the distressful climax; but nothing can furnish a finer illustration than Orpah and Ruth.

Lord Kames, however, in his chapter upon the Language of Passion, after having observed, that immoderate grief is mute, because complaining is struggling for consolation, hath illustrated that remark by so apt a story from the 3d book of Herodotus, that I am sure the reader will not be displeased with me for setting it down amongst the notes for his service.

" Cam-

press their speedy return. She painted the various disasters they

" Cambyses, when he conquered Egypt, took Psammenitus the king prisoner; and for trying his constancy, ordered his daughter to be dressed in the habit of a slave, and to be employed in bringing water from the river; his son also was led to execution with a halter about his neck. The Egyptians vented their sorrow in tears and lamentations; Psammenitus only, with a downcast eye, remained silent. Afterward meeting one of his companions, a man advanced in years, who, being plundered of all, was begging alms, he wept bitterly, calling him by his name. Cambyses, struck with wonder, demanded an answer to the following question : " Psammenitus, thy master Cambyses is desirous to know, why, after thou hadst seen thy daughter so ignominiously treated, and thy son led to execution, without exclaiming or weeping, thou shouldest be so highly concerned for a poor man, no way related to thee ? " Psammenitus returned the following answer : " Son of Cyrus, the calamities of my family are too great to leave me the power of weeping; but the misfortunes of a companion, reduced in his old age to want of bread, is a fit subject for lamentation."

would be liable to, in her company—told them she had no more sons to give them for husbands—nor even a hut, however uncheary, and forlorn, to accommodate them with in her own country—and furthermore, that she had not wherewithal to repose her own head upon, if, after the fatigues of travel, she should haply arrive safe. And, now she once more pressed the women in a farewell embrace, whilst she closed her arguments with another blessing, more melting even than the first. “ Nay—my daughters—weep not I intreat you. It grieveth me more for your sakes than my own, that the hand of the

“ Lord

“ Lord hath gone out against me.” This was the touchstone : she had now fairly discovered all the horrors of her situation, and shewed herself a woman without accommodation — a traveller without hope of rest at the end of her journey, and a widow, without one to take her by the hand, and say unto her, Welcome unfortunate — welcome again to thine own country. The picture was too darkly shaded for Orpah. The dread of poverty, and all its sable catalogue of terrors, struck her at once : she shed the tribute of a few more tears — sacrificed a few more sighs, and went her way. Not so the affec-

affectionate Ruth. How excellently marked, and that, by a single word, is the conduct of each. “Orpah *kissed* her mother-in-law; “but Ruth *clave* unto her.” The sentence, though thus compressed, is emphatically copious in point of meaning: but, indeed, the *multum in parvo*, should be one characteristic of the sacred writings. “Orpah *kissed* her mother-in-“ law,” i. e. she gave her a farewell embrace, wept a woman’s sorrow, and left her mother to wander over the world. “But Ruth *clave* unto “her.” Struck to the heart at the prospect of seeing her friend and parent no more, and still calling to

to mind the thousand endearments which had formerly made precious her society, and even feeling some additional sympathy from being involved in a calamity, which arose from the mischances of one house, and one family, she endured not the idea of her departure: so far otherwise, indeed, that she “*claved unto her*,” i. e. clung round her neck—kissed her with an ardour, as if she designed to leave the seal of her very soul impressed on her lips for ever. In vain did the noble-minded Naomi exhibit to her the various miseries which were at hand, and against which, there was no comfortable provision—

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In vain did she point to the example, the politic and prudent example of Orpah, her sister—In scorn of such conduct, and to close at once all future dissuasions, she thus declared, to the eternal honour of her sex, the glowing resolutions of her soul. “Intreat me;”  
“not to leave thee, or to return;”  
“from following after thee, for  
“whither thou goest, I will go;  
“and where thou lodgest, I will  
“lodge; thy people shall be my  
“people, and thy God my God.”  
The whole beauty and force of this passage is not seen at once: it is a very fine climax, and there is amazing elegance in the gradations.

tions. The full sense implied, seems to branch out in this manner. She begins with desiring Naomi to urge the subject of separation no longer, since she has completely made up her mind upon it. This is the first and *slightest* part. In the next place, she unfolds her first design to follow her fortunes in whatever part of the habitable globe she thinks proper to pursue them : but not thinking this sufficiently expressive of her affection, she resolves to take up her abode in the same house with her—to lodge under the same roof, however poor, and to share the same bed, however inelegant.—

E 2

After

After this, she resolves to know no other people, than such as are equally the common friends of both—to enter into no attachments, but those which are united by the same tender ties to her dear Naomi; and to form no connections whatever, that can, in the least, derogate from the love she bore her. But she is not contented with having delivered these assurances, for she goes on, declaring that her very religion shall be the religion of her friend—that one faith, and one hope, shall animate their devotion, and that the God of one, shall be the God of the other. Even this does not satisfy her :

her : for, she next determines not only to go with her the pilgrimage of life, but attend her *beyond the gate of death*—to die *with* her Naomi, should it be her Naomi's lot to fall first, and to be buried at last in the same grave : and this she confirmed by an immediate oath of the utmost importance and sanctity amongst the daughters of Judah : “The Lord God do so to me, and more also, if ought but death”—she might have said—if death itself, part thee and me.

“When Naomi saw that she was steadfastly minded to go, she left

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" off persuading her ; so they went  
" until they came to Beth-lehem ;  
" and when they arrived, it came to  
" pass, that all the city were mov-  
" ed about them, and they said,  
" Is this Naomi ?" Here are fresh  
morals and fresh elegancies opened  
upon us : the disconsolate Naomi  
had no sooner set her foot upon  
her own land, than all those little  
passions which lie lurking in the  
bosoms of the illiberal and the in-  
hospitable, were instantly awaken-  
ed. Curiosity surveyed the tatters  
which she had not the soul to re-  
pair.—Ill-nature was, we may be  
sure, officious enough to throw in  
her bitter sarcasm. Pride was  
ready

ready with her insulting offer of pity—Avarice lamented his incapacity to answer the good wishes of his heart; and in short, every arrogant, every paltry propensity was in arms against our defenceless travellers. But as Naomi originally lived in some degree of comfort and credit in her own country, and was now reduced, *she*, of course, more particularly was the mark of their obloquy and conversation.

Upon entering the city, therefore, the mob flocked about her, to indulge the vulgar and villainous joy, of adding a fresh load to the

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heart which was already groaning under its burthen; for it is, but too generally the horrid maxim, to assist where assistance is unnecessary, and to *deny* such assistance where it may be the means of continuing life, or of promoting happiness. And they said one to another—measuring no doubt the poor wretch from top to toe; and noteing with cruel criticism, every unfortunate particular—“Is this “Naomi?” God of Heaven, as much as to say—is this the woman—the wife of Elimelech, who lived in such plenty—this poor ragged wretch—this shadow of herself—“Is this Naomi?” Mercy upon us

21.5.94

—who

—who would have thought it? Having exhausted all the unfeeling and hardened remarks, customary on such occasions, all their compassion, and all their cruelty, ended exactly in the old way :—in leaving her the loss of some sighs and tears—poorer than they found her. She soon found, that to rely upon the kindness of old friends, was but a precarious mercy : for it is not bearing too hard I fear upon human nature to suppose, that her very next-door neighbour, the very companion of all her girlish sports, would give with an ill grace, if she gave at all, that pillow, or that bread, of which, after

so wearysome a journey she certainly stood much in need. Ill-used by the world therefore, she began to lose the hope of such resources—the benevolence of distant relations, in whose memory she might be able to revive the images of tenderness, was likewise a fond idea, that was born and buried almost in the same instant. Nothing of comfort seemed to remain in reserve, till the excellent Ruth, the faithful partner of her sufferings, suggested an expedient. And she said unto her friend, I perceive, oh my dear Naomi, that our conveniences must depend upon ourselves, and that we must  
owe

owe our daily bread, to our daily labour: as it is now the beginning of the harvest, behold the opportunity of exerting ourselves is at hand. Thou, indeed, art too much afflicted to toil: but for my part —much and tenderly as I sympathize with thee, I am in the prime of my youth, and able to gather something from the field: “Let me now therefore go and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I may find grace.”

“ Now it was so, that Naomi had a kinsman of her husband’s, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elianilech, and his name

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“ name was Boaz :” and it happened as Ruth was gleaning after the reapers, she was situate on a part of the field belonging to Boaz. This circumstance occasioned a turn of fortune perfectly dramatic. For, Boaz, coming to take a view of his reapers, perceiving the stranger, said unto the servant who was set over the reapers, “ Whose damsel “ is this ?” The servant’s answer is penned with the most natural simplicity. “ It is the Moabitish “ damsel, that came back with “ Naomi, out of the country of “ Moab : and she said, I pray “ you let me glean, and gather “ after

“ after the reapers among the  
“ sheaves : so she came and hath  
“ continued amongst us even  
“ from the morning until now,  
“ that she tarried a little in the  
“ house.” Something there was  
either in this account, or in the  
appearance of the object, which  
won much upon the favour of the  
landlord : for it is surely a softer  
voice, even than the voice of hos-  
pitality, that speaks in the sequel.  
“ Hearest thou not my daughter?  
“ go not I charge you to glean in  
“ any other field, neither go from  
“ hence, but abide here fast by  
“ my maidens.” I have given par-  
ticular injunctions to “ the young  
“ men

“ men that they shall not touch  
“ thee. And when thou art a-  
“ thirst, go to the vessels, and  
“ drink of that which the young  
“ men have drawn.” Here, be-  
gan the first fruits of her fidelity ;  
and the partiality of Boaz made  
a very rapid progres, for in his  
second address he was more bene-  
volent than in the first : He in-  
vited her to consider herself, as one  
of his own people, to “ eat of the  
“ bread, to dip her welcome morsel  
“ in the vinegar” at meal times,  
and to sit chearfully beside the reap-  
ers. Nay more, with his own  
hand—surely the heart extended  
it—“ he reached her parched corn,  
“ and

"and she did eat, and was suffi-  
"ced and left." Now it was  
that Boaz began to discover more  
evidently, that, the spring of this  
generous current lay very near the  
heart: When she was risen up to  
glean after her repast, he com-  
manded the young men to shew  
her all possible marks of courtesy  
and distinction. His strict orders  
were, not to suffer her to gather  
the scanty pittance, ear by ear, af-  
ter the cautious rake had gone  
over the ground, but to let her  
glean unquestioned, even *amongst  
the sheaves*. Nay more, they were  
to let some handfulls fall on *pur-  
pose* for her, and leave them for  
her

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her particular gleaning : And indeed, such was the successful consequence of these indulgences, that after she had beat out what she had been permitted to glean in one single day, “ it was about an “ ephah of barley.” This, the kind creature carried with all the expedition of affection to her friend : and when Naomi saw it—when the soul of the sorrowful widow fang for joy ; then Ruth related to her the whole history of her good fortune, and concluding that the name of the hospitable owner of the land was Boaz. This intelligence revived her spirits like a cordial, and she exclaims with the most

most animated transport: "the man  
is near a-kin to us," my beloved  
Ruth—"one of our *next* kinsmen."  
Often, and with equal success, she  
went after this into the field, and  
continued there to earn a very  
comfortable living for herself and  
her friend, even to the close of  
the harvest. In the mean time,  
the passion of Boaz had made a  
very pathetic progress, and the re-  
sult of it was, that he became the  
honourable lover of our fair glean-  
er, and renewed his acquaintance  
with his relation Naomi, to whom  
he made, we are told, various pre-  
sents. Boaz and Ruth were soon  
united, and, as a convincing in-

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stance of the harmony in which the family lived together, we find, highly to the gratification of every elegant heart, that when Ruth presented to Boaz a child—her first-born—Naomi,—after all the perils of her past life,—re-enjoyed the sweets of privacy and peace : “ for she took the babe, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it :” And I must not forget to add, that this very child, whose name was Obed, was the grandfather of the famous David, to whose pen, the Psalms are attributed ; which, both as pieces of scripture and of writing, are totally unrivalled in point of energy

and sublimity, by any composition that hath yet been, or that probably ever will be, produced in human language.

Undoubtedly our English Virgil, the author of the Seasons, took from this story the hint of his episode of Palemon and Lavinia: but, beautiful as that episode may be, I by no means think he hath improved the present subject. Indeed, it is not *easy* to improve any of the sacred narratives, nor was Mr. Thomson a poet of simplicity: He hath, however, followed the original pretty closely, especially in the

principal incidents: yet Palamon  
is a poor copy of Boaz, and La-  
vinia is less captivating than Ruth.

But I shall quote Mr. Thom-  
son's poetical paraphrase—for it is  
little more—that the reader may  
compare it with the original.

The lovely young Lavinia once had  
friends;  
And fortune smil'd, deceitful, on her birth,  
For, in her helpless years depriv'd of all,  
Of every stay, save innocence and Heaven,  
She, with her widow'd mother, feeble; old,  
And poor, liv'd in a cottage, far remov'd  
Among the windings of a woody vale;  
By solitude and deep surrounding shades,  
But more by bashful modesty, conceal'd.  
Together thus they shunn'd the cruel scorn  
Which virtue, sunk to poverty, would meet

From giddy passion and low-minded pride;  
Almost on nature's common bounty fed;  
Like the gay birds that sung them to re-  
pose,  
Content, and careless of to-morrow's fare.  
Her form was fresher than the morning  
rose,

When the dew wets its leaves; unstain'd,  
and pure,

As is the lily, or the mountain snow.

The modest virtues mingled in her eyes,  
Still on the ground dejected, darting all  
Their humid beams into the blooming  
flowers;

Or when the mournful tale her mother  
told,

Of what her faithless fortune promis'd  
to her,

Thrill'd in her thought, they, like the  
dewy star

Of evening, shone in tears. A native  
grace

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Sat fair-proportion'd on her polish'd limbs,  
Veil'd in a simple robe, their best attire,  
Beyond the pomp of dress; for loveliness  
Needs not the foreign aid of ornament,  
But is when unadorn'd adorn'd the most,  
Thoughtless of beauty, she was beauty's  
self,

Recluse amid the close-embowering woods.  
As in the hollow breast of Appenine,  
Beneath the shelter of encircling hills,  
A myrtle rises, far from human eye,  
And breathes its balmy fragrance o'er the  
wild;  
So flourish'd blooming, and unseen by all,  
The sweet Lavinia; till, at length, com-  
pell'd

By strong Necessity's supreme command,  
With smiling patience in her looks, she  
went

To glean Palemon's fields. The pride of  
swains  
Palemon was, the generous, and the rich;  
Who

Who led the rural life in all its joy  
And elegance, such as Arcadian song  
Transmits from ancient uncorrupted times;  
When tyrant custom had not shackled  
man,

But free to follow nature was the mode.

*He then, his fancy with autumnal scenes  
Amusing, chanc'd beside his reaper-train  
To walk, when poor Lavinia drew his eye ;  
Unconscious of her power, and turning  
quick*

With unaffected blushes from his gaze :  
He saw her charming, but he saw not half  
The charms her down-cast modesty con-  
ceal'd.

That very moment love and chaste desire  
Sprung in his bosom, to himself unknown ;  
For still the world prevail'd, and its dread  
laugh,

Which scarce the firm philosopher can  
scorn,

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Should his heart own a gleaner in the field:  
And thus in secret to his soul he sigh'd.

" What pity! that so delicate a form,  
" By beauty kindled, where enlivening  
sense  
" And more than vulgar goodness seem  
to dwell,  
" Should be devoted to the rude embrace  
" Of some indecent clown! She looks,  
methinks,  
" Of old Acasto's line; and to my mind  
" Recalls that patron of my happy life,  
" From whom my liberal fortune took its  
rise;  
" Now to the dust gone down; his hou-  
ses, lands,  
" And once fair-spreading family, dis-  
olv'd.  
" 'Tis said that in some lone obscure re-  
treat,

" Urg'd

“ Urg’d by remembrance sad, and decent pride,  
“ Far from those scenes which knew their better days,  
“ His aged widow and his daughter live,  
“ Whom yet my fruitless search could never find.  
“ Romantic wish! would this the daughter were!”

When, strict enquiring, from herself he found She was the same, the daughter of his friend, Of bountiful Acasto; who can speak The mingled passions that surpriz’d his heart, And thro’ his nerves in shivering transport ran? Then blaz’d his smother’d flame, avow’d, and bold;

And

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And as he view'd her, ardent, o'er and  
o'er,

Love, gratitude, and pity wept at once.  
Confus'd, and frightened at his sudden  
tears,

Her rising beauties flush'd a higher bloom,  
As thus Palemon, passionate, and just,  
Pour'd out the pious rapture of his soul.

“ And art thou then Acaiso's dear re-  
 mains ?

“ She, whom my restless gratitude has  
sought,

“ So long in vain ? O Heavens ! the very  
fame,

“ The softened image of my noble friend,

“ Alive his every look, his every feature,

“ More elegantly touch'd. Sweeter than  
spring !

“ Thou sole surviving blossom from the  
root

“ That

“ That nourish'd up my fortune ! Say,  
ah where,

“ In what sequester'd desart, hast thou  
drawn

“ The kindest aspect of delighted Hea-  
ven ?

“ Into such beauty spread, and blown so  
fair !

“ Tho' poverty's cold wind, and crush-  
ing rain,

“ Beat keen, and heavy, on thy tender  
years ?

“ O let me now, into a richer soil,

“ Transplant thee safe ! where vernal  
funs, and showers,

“ Diffuse their warmest, largest influence ;

“ And of my garden be the pride, and  
joy !

“ Ill it befits thee, oh it ill befits

“ Acasto's daughter, his whose open  
stores,

“ Tho' vast, were little to his ampler heart,

“ The

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" The father of a country, thus to pick  
" The very refuse of those harvest-fields,  
" Which from his bounteous friendship I  
enjoy.  
" Then threw that shameful pittance  
from thy hand,  
" But ill apply'd to such a rugged task ;  
" The fields, the master, all, my fair, are  
thine ;  
" If to the various blessings which thy  
house no vysed has need had  
" Has on me lavish'd, thou wilt add that  
bliss,  
" That dearest bliss, the power of blef-  
sing thee !"  
Here ceas'd the youth : yet still his  
speaking eye  
Express'd the sacred triumph of his soul,  
With conscious virtue, gratitude, and love,  
Above the vulgar joy divinely rais'd.  
Nor waited he reply. Won by the charm  
of

Of goodness irresistible, and all  
In sweet disorder lost, she blush'd consent.  
The news immediate to her mother  
brought,  
While, pierc'd with anxious thought, she  
pin'd away  
The lonely moments for Lavinia's fate;  
Amaz'd, and scarce believing what she  
heard,  
Joy seiz'd her wither'd veins, and one  
bright gleam  
Of setting life shone on her evening-hours:  
Not less enraptur'd than the happy pair;  
Who flourish'd long in tender bliss, and  
rear'd  
A numerous offspring, lovely like them-  
selves,  
And good, the grace of all the country  
round.



## E S S A Y XV.

### GOLIATH of GATH.

#### P A S S A G E.

AND DAVID SAID UNTO SAUL, LET NO MAN'S HEART FAIL BECAUSE OF HIM: THY SERVANT WILL GO AND FIGHT WITH THIS PHILISTINE.

**I**T is very remarkable, that all those personages of sacred memory, whose transactions are recorded in the biographical parts of the Bible, have distinguished themselves for personal bravery in the most early periods of life.

Thus,

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Thus, Moses, yet a child, smote the Egyptian in defence of his brother; and, in the case before us, the youth David, who was, even before this time, so enchanting a musician, as to vanquish an evil spirit by the melody of his harp, commences an illustrious and warlike character all at once, by subduing the man, of whom, whole armies were afraid, in single combat. This history, is, likewise, fruitful of very fine things, and favourable to the remark of a commentator: There is a skill observable in the *conduct* of the sacred narratives rarely, if ever, seen in other writings: and it shall be

and T

the

the busines of this illustration to shew, that the chain of *real* circumstances relating to the duel betwixt David and Goliah, is, from the beginning to the end, from the first syllable to the last, a match for any composition whatever—setting aside the matter of scripture—even in point of what the dramatists call *fable*. And I am thus particularly earnest to display, in this work, the *literary* excellence of the Holy Bible; because I have reason to apprehend it is too frequently laid by, under a notion of its being a dull, dry, and unentertaining system; whereas the fact is quite otherwise: it con-

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tains all that can be *wished*, by the truest intellectual taste ; it enters more sagaciously, and more deeply, into human nature ; it develops character, delineates manner, charms the imagination, and warms the heart more effectually than any other book extant : and if once a man would take it into his hand, without that strange prejudicing idea of its flatness, and be willing to be pleased, I am morally certain he would find all his favourite authors dwindle in the comparison, and conclude, that he was not only reading the most religious, but the most *entertaining* book in the world.

It

It is my present design, therefore, to display the story now under consideration, as a performance, written with the greatest art, and managed with the most masterly judgment. This will best be done, by selecting, from the whole matter, particular passages, and making a few comments thereupon.

The very exordium of the story presents us with an image, that prepares us for something extraordinary.

“ Saul and the men of Israel  
“ were gathered together, and  
G 2                    “ pitched

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“ pitched by the valley of Elah,  
“ and set the battle in array, a-  
“ gainst the Philistines. And the  
“ Philistines stood on a mountain  
“ on the one side, and Israel stood  
“ on a mountain on the other,  
“ and there was a valley *between*  
“ them.” Fancy herself could  
not have imagined any thing more  
picturesque ; nor could any mar-  
tial skill have made a more aweful  
arrangement. The next circum-  
stance is as interesting as unex-  
pected : “ And there went out a  
“ champion out of the camp of  
“ the Philistines, named Goliah  
“ of Gath.” The description of  
this man is every way suited to  
alarm ;

alarm ; and I will be bold to say, far transcends in equipment the heroes of Homer himself. I submit it to all the poetical enthusiasts. " His height was six cubits and a span : he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and was armed with a coat of mail ; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekles of brass." I must here interrupt the narrative, to observe, with what skill we are told of the strength of Goliah. It is not mentioned in the ordinary way, by a recital of his former achievements, but it is implied by the prodigious burthen he was able to bear upon his back ; for, besides

G 3

that,

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that, "the head of his spear weighed for hundred shekles of iron," the weight of his coat was five thousand shekles of brass." But to go on.

" And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders: and the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekles of iron; and one, bearing a shield, went before him." The terror and consternation with which this gigantic appearance must strike the spectators, is much easier conceived than it can be described. All must

have been suspense, and silent agitation—the Israelites must look at the man of Gath, with dismay; and the Philistines must have viewed their warrior as the tremendous tower of their strength. His address to the armies of the adverse party, could only serve to heighten their apprehensions, for he defied the whole force of Israel, and thirsted for war, as if it were an appetite in him : “ Give me a man ” (said he), give me a man, that “ we may fight together.” What a sanguinary sentence ! it smacks of blood and of dispatch : it shews at once, an eagerness to destroy, and to seize a second victim. Even

G 4

Saul

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Saul was daunted at the challenge, and in all the tribes of embattled Israel (amongst which were the brothers of David) there could not be found a man to accept it. The unrivalled Philistine, in all the arrogance of superiority and triumph, repeated the challenge, morning and evening, for forty days.—

About this time, young David was dispatched by his father Jesse to carry provisions to his brethren in the camp ; for this office he was called up from the pastoral employment of tendence on the flocks. These, he left to the care of another keeper, and went, as he had been commanded ; “ And *lue2* “ he

“ he came to the trench as  
“ the armies of the host were go-  
“ ing forth to the fight, and were  
“ shouting for the battle : for  
“ Israel and the Philistines had  
“ put the battle in array, army  
“ against army.”

The stripling could not have arrived in a more critical time, nor at any more likely to awake in him the sparks of glory, especially as his brethren were all engaged in the cause. He had scarce finished the first salutations with his brethren, before another matter fell out wonderfully well calculated to kindle the flame of honour ; for, while  
he

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he was conversing with his brethren, there came up the Philistine of Gath again, and, with additional insolence, announced his defiance. The Israelites were sore afraid, and ingloriously fled. David's brethren, then, related to him, the *former* menaces of Goliah, and the promises of reward which the king offered to any man who should kill him—that the house of the conqueror's father was to be free, and the victor himself, to have great riches, and the hand of the king's daughter. How finely is the nature of envy and warlike ambition touched in the conduct of David's brother, when the lad

first

first shewed the dawning of his spirit: and this is carried still higher, when Saul himself expresses, afterwards, the jealousy of his heart, at his being called only the Slayer of Thousands, while to David's arm the women ascribed victory over *Tens* of Thousands. But of this in its place. Some strokes of emulation there were in David's discourse, which soon reached the ear of the general, and which procured him an immediate interview. Courage is no respecter of persons: the young man is represented as speaking to Saul, with even more intrepidity than he spake to his brethren. In

the

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the first part of his conversation he addresses him upon the subject, with all the ardour of a glowing and independent spirit. He said : “ Let no man’s heart fail him, because of this Goliah ; thy *servant*, will go, and fight with the Philistine.” Modest, but glorious : thy *servant* will, at least, go and *fight* with this presumptuous boaster. It was natural for Saul to treat this offer at first, as a folly of juvenile spirit, laudable enough, but nothing effectual ; and his reply to it must have been delivered smilingly. Thou, child ! Thou art not able to go against this Philistine, to fight with him : for thou art but

a youth, though a brave one; “and  
“ he a man of war from his youth”  
—from his very infancy, trained to  
the knowledge and exercise of  
arms. The modesty, brevity, and  
conciseness with which our young  
hero asserts his pretensions to suc-  
cess from this engagement, is in-  
conceivably pretty, and attracting.

“ Thy servant kept his fa-  
“ ther’s sheep, and there came a  
“ lion and a bear, and took a  
“ lamb out of the flock :

“ And I went out after him,  
“ and smote him, and delivered  
“ the lamb out of his mouth, and  
“ when

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“ when he arose again, I caught  
“ him by his beard, and smote  
“ him, and slew him.

“ Thy servant slew both, the  
“ lion and the bear : and this un-  
“ circumcised Philistine shall be  
“ one of them, seeing he hath de-  
“ fied the armies of the living  
“ God.

“ The Lord that delivered me  
“ out of the paw of the lion, and  
“ out of the paw of the bear, he  
“ will deliver me also out of the  
“ hand of this Philistine \*.”

Saul

\* This gallant and modest address, attended as it  
is with every prepossessing circumstance, bears some  
resem-

Saul was so charmed with his  
bravery and heroic sentiments,  
that

resemblance to the story of young Norval in the Tragedy of Douglas, when he displays his heroic spirit, and is first admitted into the presence of Lord and Lady Randolph. Perhaps, the author really had the bravery of the conqueror of Goliah in his eye, which is the more likely, as an intimate acquaintance with the scriptures, and, no doubt, a veneration for them, was in the way of Mr. Hume's professional studies. At any rate, the speech will read extremely well after that of the stripling David, whether it be intended, or accidental, the resemblance is striking.

My name is Norval : on the Grampian hills  
My father feeds his flocks ; a frugal swain,  
Whose constant cares were to encrease his store,  
And keep his only son, myself, at home.  
For I had heard of battles, and I long'd  
To follow to the field some warlike lord ;  
And Heaven soon granted what my sire denied.  
This moon which rose last night, round as my shield,  
Had not yet fill'd her horns, when, by her light,  
A band of fierce barbarians, from the hills,  
Rush'd like a torrent down upon the vale,  
Sweeping our flocks and herds. The shepherds fled  
For

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that he began already to hope something from his efforts, insomuch, that he said : “ Go, my “ lad, and the Lord go with thee.” But the preparatory ceremony,

For safety, and for succour. I alone,  
With bended bow, and quiver full of arrows,  
Hover'd about the enemy, and mark'd  
The road he took, then hasted to my friends :  
Whom, with a troop of fifty chosen men,  
I met advancing. The pursuit I led,  
Till we o'ertook the spoil-encumber'd foe.  
We fought and conquer'd. Ere a sword was drawn,  
An arrow from my bow had pierc'd their chief,  
Who wore that day the arms which now I wear.  
Retiring home in triumph, I disdain'd  
The shepherd's slothful life ; and having heard  
That our good king had summon'd his bold peers  
To lead their warriors to the Carron side,  
I left my father's house, and took with me  
A chosen servant to conduct my steps :—  
Yon trembling coward who forsook his master.  
Journeying with this intent, I past these towers,  
And, Heaven-directed, came this day to do  
The happy deed that gilds my humble name.

which

which succeeded this commission, is most beautiful, indeed! Delighted with his generous ambition, Saul, with his own hand and acoutrements, equipped David for the battle; he put an helmet of brass upon his head, and defended his body with a coat of mail; then, girding his sword upon his armour, he assayed to go—but—touched by some secret inspiration—he again divested himself of the armour, and putting only five smooth stones out of the brook, he took his staff, his scrip, and his sling, and thus, like a shepherd, drew near to the Philistine. There

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is great imagery in the following  
verses.

“ And the Philistine came on,  
“ and the man that bare the shield  
“ went before him; and when  
“ the Philistine looked about and  
“ saw David, he *disdained* him.”

*Disdained* is, perhaps, the only word  
in this language that could have  
been used properly on this occasion.  
There was so palpable a difference  
between the combatants, and the  
superiority and strength evidently  
lay so much on the side of Goliath,  
that he *disdained* to fight with him,  
very naturally thinking him no  
object of his spear: for David had  
every

every personal advantage, being a lad of a ruddy and fair countenance. It never entered into the imagination of the Philistine that the battle was not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift. The ideas of a more powerful Providence were swallowed up in the vanity of his own vigour ; and yet that vanity was somewhat piqued, when he beheld our daring youth meet him only with a stick, and a string. "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" This soon exasperated him, and he cursed David by *his own gods*.

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Whoever examines the scriptures, will find the nicest preservation of character, each delicately discriminated, and so admirably contrasted, that nothing which marks one, is given heterogeneously, to another. This has also been considered among the first excellencies of composition : its beauty is manifested in Shakespear much, but in the Bible more. An instance of this is before us. We never once lose sight of the savage audacity of Goliah, from his first menace to his death—he speaks but little, but every word seems to fall from the lip of a giant. When David persists in his resolution to

fight, he said, "Come to me, and  
" I will give thy flesh unto the fowls  
" of the air, and to the beasts of the  
" field." The dependence of Da-  
vid was upon his God, and in such  
confidence he returned the threat  
of Goliah with additional fury.  
" This day will the Lord deliver  
" thee into my hand, and I will  
" smite thee, and take thine head  
" from thee, that all the earth  
" may know there is a God in If-  
" rael : and all this assembly shall  
" know that the Lord saveth not  
" with the sword and spear; for  
" the battle is the Lord's, and he  
" will give you into our hands."

They engaged, and the prophesy

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of the young warrior was fulfilled. The power of the Divine assistance which can make all human strength more feeble than the sinews of the new-born babe, is nobly illustrated in the death of Goliath, which, notwithstanding all appearances, was effected by a stone rejected by a very boy, from a sling. But the account itself is well worth reciting.

" And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand

“ hand in his bag, and took thence  
“ a stone and flang it, and smote  
“ the Philistine in his forehead,  
“ that the stone *sunk* into his fore-  
“ head ; and he fell upon his face  
“ unto the earth.

“ Then he ran and stood upon  
“ the Philistine, and took the  
“ sword of Goliah, and drew it  
“ out of the sheath, and slew him  
“ and cut off his head therewith :  
“ and when the Philistines saw  
“ their champion was dead, they  
“ fled.”

By such means was the victory completed, and thus fell that ter-

H.4. ror.

ror to the Israelitish bands, Goliah of Gath.

Having gone through the most important parts of this interesting duel, we have leisure for a few supplemental reflections, in the way of literary criticism. This Goliah of Gath reminds one of Homer's Ajax; and, indeed, the process of the engagement between the giant and David, is, in many particulars, like the ceremony of the single combat of Telamon and Hector. The above description of Goliah's person, and warlike preparations, are more military and formidable than the hero of Homer.

Homer. Let the foregoing character of the Giant of Gath be compared with what follows :

Now Ajax brac'd his dazzling armour on,  
Sheath'd in bright steel, the giant warrior  
shone :

He moves to combat with majestic pace ;  
So stalks in arms, the grizly god of Thrace.  
Thus march'd the chief, tremendous as a  
god :

Grimly he smil'd ; earth trembled as he  
strode ;  
His massey javelin, quiv'ring in his hand,  
He stood the bulwark of the Grecian band.  
Thro' ev'ry Argive heart new transport  
ran ;

All Troy stood trembling at the mighty man ;  
Ev'n Hector paus'd ; and with new doubt  
oppress'd ;  
Felt his great heart suspended in his breast.

Scarce any part of this description,  
nor

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nor of its original, will bear bringing near that of the “giant warrior” of the scripture. His moving with majestic pace to combat, is less terrific than Goliah’s triumphant march in the full view of the astonished Philistines. There seems also less propriety in Hector’s *pause of fear*, than in the inapprehensive and intrepid conduct of David, who, though not practised like Hector,

From right to left the dextrous lance to wield,

And bear thick battle on his sounding shields,

was, nevertheless, uniformly brave and heroic to the very heart, nothing able him to miscarry without

TOM

without ever finding that heroism suspended, even at the presence of Goliah. "All Troy" might, indeed, be supposed to tremble at the mighty son of Telamon, in the same manner as Saul and the tribes of embattled Israel, trembled before the arrogant Philistine: but for Hector's heart to fail him, though but for a moment, was, surely, such a falling off from the idea we wish to entertain of that celebrated hero, that one is almost angry with Homer for doing our favourite so palpable an injury in the tenderest and brightest part of his character. It may be urged, indeed, that David had confidence in

his God, and that his bravery emanated from inspiration. An argument, very similar, may be brought in favour of the Trojan hero, who, as we are to believe, certainly trusted as much in the virtue of *his* cause, and the goodness of *his* god, as the other; nor did the poet ever suffer him to go to the battle till those deities were first supplicated. Witness the address offered up, on the very occasion of the contest with Ajax.

Oh, Father of mankind, superior lord,  
On lofty Ida's holy hill ador'd :  
Who in the highest Heav'n has fix'd thy  
throne,  
Supreme of gods, unbounded, and alone :  
Grant thou, &c.

The

The shield of Ajax is, however,  
more particularly described than  
the shield of Goliah.

Stern Telamon, behind his ample shield,  
As from a brazen tower, o'erlook'd the  
field.

Huge was its orb, with seven thick folds  
o'ercast,

Of tough bull-hides, of solid brass, the  
last.

But the circumstantial account of  
the giant's spear, the weight of its  
head, his greaves of brass, and his  
target; his coat of mail, and his  
maffey helmet, are all such evi-  
dences of his astonishing STRENGTH,  
and, apparently, invincible vigour,  
that, without any parade or super-  
fluity of words, they give us the ex-

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act image of the savage, who called out, in an exclamation, worthy of him, “ Give me a man, give  
“ me a man, that we may fight  
“ together.”

But if, indeed, we expect in any performance to find a character delineated with parallel force—if we wish to read any description like Goliath of Gath, we must search for it in the writings of one, whose inspiration was chiefly drawn from the sources of sacred composition. Milton drank at the fountain-head, and his poetry flowed  
From Siloa's brook,  
Bait by the oracle of God.

The

The sublimity with which he  
has drawn Satan, when

—Front to front he stood,  
In terrible array,

is such a piece of poetry, and exhibits such an assemblage of grand images, as nothing but a genius altogether illimitable could possibly furnish. Long quotations, however, not coming within the design or compass of this work, I shall only present such lines as shew the Prince of Darkness not very unlike —in point of warlike preparation, and personal appearance—to the giant, who was subdued by the youth David; and with these verses we will close the Essay.

---

Before

— Before the cloudy van,  
On the rough edge of battle e'er it join'd,  
Satan, with vast and haughty strides ad-  
vanc'd,  
Came tow'ring, arm'd in Adamant and  
gold.

— Then on the heads of foes,  
Main promontories flung, which in the  
air  
Came shadowing. Long time in evil  
scale  
The battle hung—Like a god he seem'd,  
Stood he, or mov'd ; in stature, motion,  
arms,  
Now wav'd his fiery sword, and in the air  
Made horrid circles. A broad sun his  
shield,  
While expectation stood in horror.

ESSAY

## ESSAY XXVI.

### STORY OF ELIJAH and the Widow of ZAREPHATH.

#### P A S S A G E.

AND SHE SAID, AS THE LORD THY GOD LIVETH, I HAVE NOT A CAKE, BUT A HANDFUL OF MEAL IN A BARREL, AND A LITTLE OIL IN A CRUSE.

THIS passage is pregnant with pleasing illustrations, being taken from a story inferior to few, if any, in sacred composition: for it not only abounds with most agreeable incidents, but furnishes

VOL. II. I a strik-

a striking and conspicuous moral: the virtue of Gratitude is very emphatically illustrated on the one hand, and the duty of Hospitality, on the other. Nor has it escaped, indeed, the remark of several writers; but the scriptures, as I have before had occasion to observe, are treasuries affording inexhausted novelty to their admirers.

The persons particularly concerned in this sacred drama, are, Elijah the prophet, and a poor widow-woman, who lived, by very hard and constant labour; so hard indeed, that she was obliged to pick

pick her faggot to light her fire,  
before she could bake the bread,  
which that labour had gleaned.  
At the time of her first meeting  
with Elijah, she was more than  
*usually* straightened ; for her whole  
stock consisted of a handful of  
meal, and a little oil ; and she was  
then stooping, in search of a few  
sticks, to dress this scanty modi-  
cum, to preserve from death, her-  
self and her son. Yet this was  
the critical period—even while she  
was thus *affectionately* employed—  
this was the moment marked out  
by Providence, to try the strength  
of her sympathy : it was alas ! no  
time to bestow, while her bounty

I 2                    was

was thus circumscribed : nor was it a fit season to shew the *natural* courtesy of her temper, when she was exerting her last efforts in relief of her child, and wanted, in the forest degree, the ordinary accommodations of life herself. Under this pressure of her circumstances, it is worth while to see how she conducted herself. When Elijah the prophet (who figures so splendidly in sacred history) foretold, that a divine punishment should alight upon Ahab (a man, who is represented as wicked and ill-disposed above all that were before him) then, to escape that resentment, which his prophecy had

had kindled against him in the breast of Ahab, he hid himself by the brook Cherith, where the ravens were commanded to cater for his support, while the brook supplied him with drink. The resource of the stream however soon failing, he again sought shelter elsewhere, and removed to Zarephath, where he no sooner arrived, than he beheld this widow-woman engaged, as before described, in gathering sticks; and he immediately called to her, and requested her to fetch him a little water in a vessel. This was not unreasonable; but did not he render it somewhat so, when he again

called her back as she was hastening to oblige him, to desire she would bring a morsel of *bread* likewise in her hand? A *morsel* of *bread*, and a *little* water, was, to be sure, asking the favour in as decent language as could be; but in this poor woman's particular situation, it must have had a very important sound: there is a most beautiful display of her charitable heart, in her answer.—“As the “Lord thy God liveth, I have not “*a cake*, but a handful of meal in a “barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: “and behold, I am gathering *two* “sticks that I may go in and dress “it for me and my son, that we

beilleo

g. 1

“may

"may eat it *and die*:" as if she had said, you see my stock, stranger—it is my very last meal—I am picking *two* sticks that I may lay my poor meal across, and then—(as all further resources fail)—my child and I will die in the arms of one another. Then it was, that Elijah bid her not fear, for that "the barrel of meal should not *waste*, " nor the cruse of oil *fail* unto the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the face of the earth;" and this he assured her, was the sentiment of God himself. Now, had this woman been inclined to save her meal and oil to herself—had she been swayed, or indeed *ought*

influenced by that powerful self-love which has so general an ascendency in the human breast; or had she even yielded to the force of those *prudent* maxims which teach, that, charity begins at *home*, and that self-preservation is *nature's first law*, how easily might she have evaded this request? nay, what a swarm of right, sound apologies presented themselves for a fair denial! To the reasons already urged she might (had she been a woman of the world) have added many others: such as the expecting condition in which she left her half-famished *child*—her own extreme hunger, and the *pity* of

of preserving herself and her little one, as long as she could possibly find the smallest means of subsistence. That to die, while yet a meal remained, would be a kind of *suicide*; and to give a morsel from any part of her own family, when a morsel was all that was left for the support of *two*, would be a prodigality for which she *ought* to suffer the poverty that must inevitably result from it. As to its being, as he said, the command of the *Almighty*, she might reasonably offer a doubt as to the *truth* of that particular. Is there not—she might reply—is there not, something of inconsistency,  
good

good stranger, in this part of your story? That we should *assist one another*, is, I know a social and a religious duty; but this must be where plenty, or at least competence, presents us with the delightful *power*.—It is not indeed surprizing that I, (being the first person you have seen) should be the first addressed on this occasion, because I know hunger catches at the slightest and nearest possibilities: but excuse me, if I think the matter of the promised *miracles* not a little problématical. Would God have directed your application to a poor *defenceless* widow-woman, who has a father-

less child to toil for, and is now labouring in the last exigency.—Would he have said—let her divide her all with you? Would *He*, who knows human nature so intimately, and who never expects us to injure *ourselves on any score whatever*.—Would *He* have me listen to that which sounds so like the trick of a needy traveller, and shall I credulously give my staff from my hand in expectation of another dropping down from Heaven?—No—friend—I understand something of this world; and though I admire to *do good*, I must not expose myself to *ridicule*—for if I was to comply with your request,

quest, tell me honestly wouldest thou not laugh at my weakness? Farewell then, and be assured, I lament my inability as much as thou lamentest thy necessity.

Having thus shewn what a very cautious woman *might* have said: let us now see what *was* really the sentiment of the occasion. There is no other answer recorded than that she *did* according to the desire of Elijah. She did not even stay to expatiate upon her own generosity — nor tell him, that if his prophecy should be *unfulfilled*, she must only starve so much the sooner for her good nature; but,   
*she*

she relied so implicitly on his sincerity, and obeyed so willingly the inspired impulse of benevolence, that she hastened to make a little cake for Elijah first, and then attended to the wants of her little one and herself. But this courtesy and confidence was preternaturally rewarded: for she and he, *and her house*, eat many days; “and the barrel of meal “wasted not, nor did the cruse of “oil fail.”

Elijah now became a lodger in the widow's house, and was considered as a part of her family, till a suspicious circumstance fell out,

which gave her at first but too much reason to alter her opinion of him. Soon after this friendship was formed between them, the son of the hostess fell sick, and his sickness was of so sore a nature, that it presently terminated in his death. The unhappy mother attributed it to some secret exertion of cruel power in Elijah ; for as he could divine *one* miracle in her favour, so she apprehended he might be able to effect *another* to her prejudice : However, certain it is, she entertained ideas exceedingly to his discredit, and indeed, esteemed the thing so very ungrateful a return for her fair

conduct and demeanour, that we find her reproaching him with all the severity of an ill-intreated friend, and all the distraction of an injured parent. “What have I “do with thee—thou man of God! “art thou come unto me, to call “my sin to my remembrance, and “to slay my son?” This appears to have been spoken with the utmost bitterness of *irony*, as if she had said:—Thou man, who pretendedst to have been directed hither by the express orders of God:—Thou messenger from the Lord of Heaven—what have I done unto thee, that thou shouldest thus requite me?—Dost thou do this  
to

to warn me how I share again  
my last meal with a stranger ?  
True it is, that thou hast in one  
instance been found faithful : true,  
that thou hast prolonged the lives  
which seemed to be drawing sooner  
to a period. But what of that—  
Hast thou taken this opportunity  
to render the mourning of the wi-  
dow thus additionally *sore*, by first  
conveying to her, the joyful tid-  
ings of plenty, only to make the  
after-stroke the more intolerable,  
by slaying her dear and only dar-  
ling ; even him, whom the fa-  
mine hath spared ? Inhuman !  
shame upon thee ! for this—shall  
the widow's curse pursue thee for  
ever :

ever: for this—but I cannot speak. Behold, the innocent victim of your barbarity—behold—my child is breathless before you.—Alas! my son—my son! how hast thou been sacrificed to the insidiousness of a stranger! It was highly in character to reprove him in this manner; and it is equally natural, that the good man should *feel* the reproof with all imaginable severity. Many circumstances concurred to make him truly wretched, even under such an *imputation*: for he doubtless considered her in the tenderest degree, as his best benefactor—as one who had manifested the *sensibility* and *duty* of

VOL. II. K her

her heart, in the very crisis, both of his fate and her own ; and lastly, as a widow, whose life was wrapt up in the life of her son. Nor could he indeed fairly blame her suspicions. Since the time, the place, and the suddenness of the lad's death, gave in some sort, a colour of probability to them. Her misery too, had its source so near the soul, that he could not attempt either to check or to chide it ; advice would have been rejected, and pity impertinent : he troubled her with neither ; but taking the baby corpse out of the mother's bosom, where (though it was dead) she was still caressing and still cradling

ling it, he carried it up to his own apartment, and laid him gently upon his own bed.

And now being at liberty to address the God who had so often and so miraculously befriended and indulged, and honoured him, he broke out into the most earnest supplication. "Oh Lord my God, my God, hast thou brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? I pray thee, that the child's soul may come into him again." The prayer was heard. In the mean time, in what a situation must he have left the

afflicted parent ! it was however, one of those sorrows which are compensated by a reverse of joy : the transition was almost instantaneous ; for when the babe began to revive, he brought it down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered it into the desiring arms of its weeping mother. Were words ever calculated to express such a stroke of transport ? it must have been a bliss which trod hard upon the very heels of agony. Parents may, perhaps, paint it to themselves : they may see (through the mirror of a sympathetic fancy) the poor widow receiving her child from the healing

hand

hand of the prophet—a child fresh blooming in the beauties of a *second* birth.—They may imagine they behold the joyful woman as it were in a frenzy of felicity, kneeling, first to the *invisible restorer*, then to Elijah, and last bathing the cheek of the child with tears of tenderness, unutterable. The prophet, indeed, said little; for language was unnecessary; the thing spoke for itself, the lovely eye was again gently opened on the light, the dimple resumed its residence, and all its little sensibilities were fully restored. “See” cried Elijah,—“thy son *liveth*.” He submitted the truth of the af-

fertion (without any tedious explanation of the means by which the recovery had been effected) to the pleasing evidence of her own senses. He had now fully rewarded her former kindness, and evinced his gratitude for the division of her *last meal*, by raising the treasure of her soul, even from the dead. I shall say no more on this charming story, but just observe, that every gentle heart will have its own commentary, and pursue the hints I have given, till they have long indulged themselves in the elegant reflection which so masterly and interesting a scene excites.

ESSAY XXVII.

## CHARACTER OF SOLOMON.

P A S S A G E.

AND JUDAH AND ISRAEL DWELT SAFELY,  
EVERY MAN, UNDER HIS VINE, AND UN-  
DER HIS FIG-TREE, FROM DAN, EVEN  
TO BEER-SHEBA, ALL THE DAYS OF  
SOLOMON.

THERE is, perhaps, as much moral sense, and literary beauty, comprised in this passage, as ever was conveyed to the human understanding, by the hand of tradition. What a paradiſical picture does it give us of the reign

of Solomon ! Majesty and mildness, power and pleasure, seem to have been the grand supporters of his throne : and we read the history of his times, with a mixture of joy and admiration.

## SOLOMON

The very first instance of his wisdom, gave to mankind the most delightful earnest of what might be expected from him. I speak of his judgment betwixt the two harlots. How finely did he distinguish the simplicity of natural sorrow, from the whineing complaint of adventitious woe : he saw the real parent, in her fears, her wishes, and her tears ; and he de-

tected the imposture, by every action. The beginning of the reign exhibits this illustrious heir of the noble David in all the glory of sublunary greatness ; “ For he had “ dominion over all the region, “ on this side the river, from “ Tiphshah, even to Azzah, over “ all the kings on this side the “ river :” and in the midst of so extensive an authority, he maintained peace on all sides around him : “ Every man dwelt safely “ under his vine, and under his “ fig-tree,” from one end of his realms to the other, “ from Dan “ even to Beer-sheba.”

What

What a prospect was here for the people ! What a joyful promise for the public heart ! But with what energy—I had almost said—enchantment—is the disposition of this prince characterized in the subsequent verse ?

“ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding, exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore.”

He had, it seems, not only the greatest wealth, but the nicest judgment, and the noblest inclination, to distribute that wealth, to make it

it conducive to general felicity. He equalled his father in his poetical capacity, and even surpassed him as a moralist : his songs are marked by an enthusiasm, a tenderness, and a pathos, in which all the treasures of the warmest, gayest, and sublimest imagination, appear to have been exhausted. Image and metaphor were equally at his command; and a genius, so ethereal, is sometimes discovered in these sallies of his pen, that his conception takes a flight too lofty for the eye to reach him. But, however amazing the powers of his fancy, they were, at least, equalled by the graver abilities of his judgment.

ment. He, by no means, figured less as a moral writer : for, his Proverbs are a collection of concise maxims, which stand, altogether unrivalled ; and are the foundation of all those short, multitudinous remarks, which have been issued from the press, since his time : but those of Solomon will, indeed, be ever separated from all others. Such knowledge of life, such various beauty in the expression—such astonishing terseness in the style—such poignancy in the satire—such purity in the phrase, and such solidity in the sense, entitled their author to the immortality

fity which he claims, and which  
he possesses.

There seems to have been a epocha in his genius : his compositions present us with a climax. From the Poet, he rises to the Moralist, and from the Moralist he soars to the Divine. The book of Ecclesiastes, is one of the finest systems, or bodies of divinity. Every sentence is sound and orthodox. His observations are accurate and devotional ; and the whole book well becomes the preacher and the pulpit. In a word, Solomon was the greatest and most general literary character that ever

wrote.

wrote. As a prince, he was amiable, beloved, and popular ; and it is impossible to give a more pleasing assurance of it, than the pacific and tranquil idea suggested by the text : “ Every man dwelt in “ safety under his own vine and “ fig-tree, even *all* the days of “ Solomon.” It is somewhat painful to view him in a religious light. Ah, Solomon, thou wisest of the wise—how couldst thou, at any time, forget the power who had dealt by thee in so liberal a manner ? eminent alike, in intellect, and in magnificence, how couldst thou so stain thy annals, as to turn aside from the author of all

all thy greatness? How couldst thou so disgrace—so prostitute the splendour of that temple which thou hadst reared and dedicated to the true God, to the dreams and weaknesses of idolatry? What, alas, could the visionary goddess of the Zidonians do for thee? What could Molech, or Ashtoreth, that deserved thy devotion, or sacrifices? Could they inspire thee with intelligence above all others, and store thy mind with all the ornaments of taste and science, and elegance and joy?

One apology, however, not a little mitigating, presents itself.

He

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He did not yield to this infatuation till he was in the decline of life—possibly, when his faculties were somewhat impaired — and when the ill advice of those who were about him, especially his concubines, teased him into error. The power of a bad woman, who has any hold upon the heart, is unlimited, and will generally render pliable to its purposes, not only the finest head, but the finest heart : and it must be also remembered, that the strength of the tender passions is always in proportion to the strength of the genius ; so that Soloman might be led, as it were, captive, in the bonds of love,

love, and sacrifice to Chemosh, not because he venerated that imaginary deity, but to avoid the persecution of the female party, which was formed against his religious integrity. At all events, let us not be too rigid, to degrade so great a character. It is well known, that the wisest men, are the most frequently seduced into the *weakest trespasses*. With all his sagacity, Solomon was a human creature. Great sensibility is liable to great mistake: where we cannot *defend* his conduct, let us *avoid* it, and where we are struck with the splendour of his capacity, let it inspire us with a modest imitation.

J. II, 107

... situas tua emissa et  
modestia non nisi et dignus signans

## **E S S A Y XXVIII.**

### **CONCLUDING STRICTURES.**

#### **On SCRIPTURAL SUBLIMITY, and BEAUTY.**

##### **P A S S A G E.**

... nobis hoc uterque to attendit  
**HE WAS HONOURED IN THE MIDST OF  
THE PEOPLE, IN HIS COMING OUT OF  
THE SANCTUARY.**

**T**HE elegant Mr. Burke\*, with his usual ingenuity, observes, that *magnificence* is a source of the sublime: after commenting upon which, he proceeds to illustrate his precepts by suitable examples,

\* *Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful.*

M

L 2      amongst

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amongst which is that of the above passage, and those *others* succeeding it, which belong to the description. It was with great propriety he fixed upon this noble panegyric, on the high priest Simon the son of Onias, as a specimen of scriptural sublimity, in the richness of imagery, and allusion. But I cannot agree with him in thinking *that* sublimity arises from a profusion of those images in which the mind is so dazzled as to make it impossible to attend to that exact coherence and agreement of the allusions, which we should require on every other occasion. With due deference to

Mr.

Mr. Burke, I will venture to say, that, *most* of the allusions are exact, and coherent. The proof is before us. Read the whole description.

“ How was he honoured in the  
“ midst of the people, in his com-  
“ ing out of the sanctuary ! He  
“ was as the morning star in the  
“ midst of a cloud, and as the  
“ moon at the full : as the sun  
“ shining upon the temple of the  
“ Most High, and as the rain-  
“ bow giveth light in the bright  
“ clouds : and as the flower of  
“ roses in the spring of the year :  
“ as lilies by the rivers of waters,

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“ and as the frankincense-tree in  
“ summer; as fire and incense in  
“ the censer; and as a vessel of  
“ gold set with precious stones;  
“ as a fair olive-tree budding forth  
“ fruit; and as a cypress which  
“ groweth up to the clouds.—  
“ When he put on the robe of  
“ honour, and was cloathed with  
“ the perfection of glory, when  
“ he went up to the holy altar, he  
“ made the garment of holiness  
“ honourable. He himself stood  
“ by the hearth of the altar com-  
“ passed with his brethren round  
“ about, as a young cedar in Li-  
“ banus, and as palm-trees com-  
“ pasled they him about. So  
“ were

" were all the sons of Aaron in  
" their glory, and the oblations  
" of the Lord in their hands, &c."

It was the intention of the son of Sirach, in these sentences, to set forth his object with all the advantages of language. Poetry and oratory were equally solicited to animate and to adorn the portrait of the priest : in consequence of which, he is attended from the sanctuary to the altar, by all the images and instruments of the Sublime and Beautiful. Behold him thus surrounded — examine the whole scene as it passes before your eye, and you will pronounce it

L 4 uniformly

uniformly admirable. He is described as coming out of the sanctuary amidst the acclamations of the people. The word *honoured*, is a most dignified addition to the greatness of his character—Let us, for a moment, leave out this single word, and see how the idea diminishes : “ He was in the midst “ of the people in his coming out “ of the sanctuary.” How poor! Restore to the sentence its full compliment, and the design of the writer, as well as the excellence of the object, is complete. “ He “ was *honoured* in the very midst “ of the people.” The next allusion carries him higher still. “ He

“ was

“ was as the morning star in the  
“ midst of a cloud.” No sooner  
was he out of the sanctuary, than  
his noble and majestic figure was  
distinguishable from the rest of the  
multitude, “ as the morning star  
“ in the midst of a cloud.” The  
allusion to the *cloud*, hath also the  
advantage of a double *propriety*,  
being, in a metaphorical sense,  
aptly designed to represent the  
thickness, and dusky appearance  
of the admiring multitude. Some  
of the succeeding allusions were  
admitted to give the high priest  
the qualities of *amiableness*, as well  
as *grandeur*. “ He was as the  
“ flower of roses in the spring of  
“ the

" the year : as lilies by the rivers  
" of waters ; and as the frankin-  
" cense-tree in summer." All  
these are expressive rather of love-  
liness than magnificence, and are  
connected, rather, with the Beau-  
tiful, than with the Sublime. Yet,  
mark how they are heightened,  
and what superior attractions they  
possess, by certain delicate strokes,  
not to be seen in the ordinary  
sketches of common poets. These  
would have thought it sufficient to  
have compared him to roses, lilies,  
and the frankincense-tree. Not  
so the son of Sirach. He painted  
the son of Onias with more exqui-  
site colouring—he drew him with

a more masterly pencil. The roses to which he was compared, were the roses of the *spring*, a season of the year when those flowers are more particularly sweet and captivating—the lilies, which, in a figurative sense, resembled him, were those which derived more elegance from their situation by the *rivers of waters*, and, whatever perfumes belong to the frankincense-tree, our poet presented it to us, in the pride of *summer*, when its beauties would naturally be in blossom. Besides this, there appears a coherence in these allusions, which may escape us at first. They seem to aim at the display

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of the *moral* character of the high priest. "A good name," says the scripture, "*smelleth sweet.*" How proper, therefore, is Simon compared to the fragrance of roses, and other odoriferous shrubs. Lilies have ever been emblematic of innocence, and purity. The *agreement* of the allusion is, therefore, exact here also. Thus might I proceed to observe the moral as well as descriptive propriety of comparing him with the rest. But it is wholly unnecessary. The abrupt and animated transition from one image to another, in this description, are so many noble instances of the Sublime and Beau-  
tiful.

tiful. What a divine glow, and what incomparable dignity is offered to us in the following passage; where the figures are changed, and the allusions altered in a moment. When he put on the robe of honour, and was cloathed with the *perfection* of glory ; when he went up to the holy altar, he made the garment of *holiness* honourable.— Had Longinus been now to revise his golden treatise, he would assuredly have inserted this passage amongst his examples of the genuine Sublime ; because it boasts of every property, which, agreeable to his own definition, belongs thereto.

“ That

" That" says he, " is grand and  
lofty, which the more we con-  
sider, the greater ideas we con-  
ceive of it: whose force we  
cannot possibly withstand; which  
immediately sinks deep, and  
makes such impressions on the  
mind, as cannot easily be worn  
out or effaced." Never were  
these precepts better illustrated  
than by the description of Simon  
the son of Ohias. The more we  
consider him, the greater is our  
conception of his grandeur, his  
virtue, and the veneration which  
attends it. From the time that he  
issues from the sanctuary amidst  
the honours of the people, to his  
standing

standing by the "altar compassed  
" by his brethren," he rises upon us  
with a force and a superiority,  
which "cannot possibly be with-  
stood," and which makes upon  
the mind an indelible impression.  
In vain shall we look amongst  
other poets and orators for a rival  
description so excellent throughout.

Mr. Burke\*, indeed, hath  
 All furnish'd, all in arms,  
All plum'd like ostriches, that with the wind  
Baited like eagles, having lately brothed;  
As full of spirits as the month of May,  
As gorgeous as the sun in midsummer,  
Wanton as youthful goats, wild as young bulls,  
I saw young Harry with his beaver on  
Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury;  
And vaulted with such ease into his seat  
As if an angel dropped from the clouds  
To turn, and wind a fiery Pegasus.

brought

brought one from an author \* the most likely to furnish it: but, although some of the allusion may be equal, others are very much inferior, and taken upon the *whole*, cannot bear the brightness of the comparison.

I have already observed, that the *descriptions* of Ossian breathe sometimes, a sublimity truly scriptural; and I have already, in a former essay, given an instance.

But as was before noted, when parallel passages are produced by way of comparison from the scri-

• Shakespear.

ad quod

tures,

tures, the pictures of the author of Fingal are only in *shadow*, and must ever stand in the *back ground* of criticism. The following allusions would be very capital, if the imagination of the reader had not been previously charmed by those which have been the subject of our present Effay.

“ Far before the rest, the son of  
“ Offian comes ; bright in the  
“ smiles of youth, fair as the first  
“ beams of the sun. His long  
“ hair waves on his back : his  
“ dark brow is half hid beneath his  
“ helmet : the sword hangs loose  
“ on the hero’s side : and his spear

" glitters as he moves : I fled  
" from his terrible eye." This is  
interesting, warm, and warlike ;  
but I again refer every reader of  
taste to the text. The sacred  
penmen surpass *tell writers*, gene-  
rally speaking, in point of figure,  
sentiment, allusion, narration, and  
every other property of perfect  
composition. Distributed up and  
down the Old and New Testa-  
ment, there a thousand passages  
more than I have now leisure to  
contemplate, which utterly anni-  
hilate any thing that can be  
brought from the stores of ancient  
or modern learning.—I conclude  
these little sketches, which are

M . . . . . only

only intended as an introduction to more, with the selection of a few passages from different parts of those most admirable volumes.

“ O Lord my God thou art  
“ very great, thou art cloathed  
“ with honour and majesty : who  
“ coverest thyself with light as with  
“ a garment : who stretchest out  
“ the Heavens like a curtain :  
“ who layeth the beams of his  
“ chambers in the waters : who  
“ maketh the clouds his chariot :  
“ who walketh upon the wings of  
“ the wind. Thou coveredst it  
“ with the deep as with a gar-  
“ ment ; the waters stood above

M 2                “ the

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“ the mountains—at thy rebuke  
“ they fled ; at the voice of thy  
“ thunder they hastened away.”—

What inexpressible sublimity in every one of these thoughts, and with how much accuracy the dictio-  
tion is adapted to display them ! What ideas can exceed those of the Deity's covering himself in a mantle of light, : mounting his cloudy chariot, and walking on the wings of the wind ?

The *ascending series*, is in this passage, very judiciously preserved ; the whole sentiment is a glorious gradation from *great*, to greater, and from that to the last positive

positive degree of the climax. I beg the reader to mark the rise of the expressions as he repeats them. There is also a particular beauty here, in the sudden transition from one person to another—“*Who* walketh upon the “wings of the wind;” and then instantly altering the address to—“*Thou* coveredst it with a deep “as with a garment.”

But a second example courts our admiration, and that of so high and exalted a nature, that a reader of true taste, and a real sense of religion, will hardly bear to engage his time in looking at

minor or modern authors; while some, probably, who have been prejudiced against the Bible, will be surprized to find such admirable, and unequalled writing in a book, which they have been taught to consider as a dull, uninteresting code of maxims, proverbs, and ordinary sentiments.

“ Whither shall I go from thy  
“ spirit? Or whither shall I flee  
“ from thy presence? If I ascend  
“ up into Heaven, thou art there:  
“ If I make my bed in Hell, be-  
“ hold, thou art there. If I take  
“ the wings of the morning, and  
“ dwell in the uttermost parts of  
“ the

" the sea : even there shall thy  
" hand lead me, and thy right  
" hand shall hold me. If I say,  
" surely the darkness shall cover  
" me, even the night shall be light  
" about me. Yea, the darkness  
" hideth not from thee ; but the  
" night shineth as the day : the  
" darkness and the light are both  
" alike to thee." In short, this, and  
various other portions of the sa-  
cred books, as infinitely exceed  
Homer, as Homer surpasses Black-  
more. There is a verse or two  
used in the burial of the dead  
(than which there never was a  
sublimer, more serious, or more  
suitable ceremony). Offian hath

also touched the same subject, but the sacred writer hath ten times the simplicity, and is abundantly more correct in the metaphors; besides that, the allusions are truer to nature and familiar life.

“ A thousand years in thy sight,  
“ O Lord, are but as yesterday :  
“ seeing that is past as a watch  
“ in the night. As soon as thou  
“ scatterest them, they are even as  
“ a sleep, and fade away suddenly,  
“ like the grass. In the morn-  
“ ing it is green and groweth up;  
“ but in the evening it is cut  
“ down, dried up, and withered.”

Were

Were we to run the parallel between this passage and that quoted from Offian, the inferiority of the latter would, perhaps, not be very agreeable to the admirers of that picturesque bard. To speak impartially, it is scarcely giving any profane writers, however popular, fair play, in comparing them with those Sublime, Beautiful, and Pathetic compositions, which are the objects of the present volumes: on the other hand, those compositions themselves, have so seldom fair play shewn to *them*, while many flimsy, frivolous, or bombastic performances, run away with the huzza of the multitude, that having

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ing had the lash of justice in hand,  
it was but right to use it a little ;  
especially as it formed an impor-  
tant part of my subject, to vindi-  
cate the Scriptures from negli-  
gence, and to hold them up as  
the patterns of purity, perspicuity,  
and all the sources of the *true Sub-  
lime.*

These sources branch out, ac-  
cording to Longinus, into the fol-  
lowing divisions :

" I. The *first* and *most excel-  
lent* of these is a boldness and  
grandeur in the *thoughts*.  
" II. *Second* is a sublimity or to " III.

“ II. The second is called the  
“ *Pathetic*, or the power of raising  
“ the passions to a violent and  
“ even enthusiastic degree ; and  
“ these two being genuine con-  
“ stituents of the *Sublime*, are the  
“ gifts of nature, whereas the  
“ other sorts depend in some mea-  
“ sure upon art.

“ III. The *third* consists in a  
“ skilful application of *figures*,  
“ which are twofold, of *sentiment*  
“ and *language*.

“ IV. The *fourth* is a noble  
“ and graceful manner of *expres-*  
“ *sion*, which is not only to choose  
“ out

“ out significant and elegant words,  
“ but also to adorn and embellish  
“ the style, by the assistance of  
“ *tropes*. rich pillars - now  
- too small - ruined our clear  
-

“ V. The fifth source of the  
“ *Sublime*, which completes all  
“ the preceding, is the *structure*  
“ or composition of all the pe-  
“ riods, in all possible dignity and  
“ *grandeur.*” mid 6 T. III  
-

It hath been my endeavour in  
this work, to try certain passages  
in the SACRED WRITINGS, by the  
test of Longinus's principles. I  
shall account myself singularly for-  
tunate if such endeavours have, in  
any

any degree, done a service to compositions, which are so able to support the trial ; but whose beauties and sublimities, though thickly scattered through almost every page, are so shamefully neglected, or misunderstood, merely, it is feared, because they are of a devotional, as well as of a poetical nature.

THE END.

